

Parsons Nursery, Bernow Experimental  
Forest Residence  
South side of U.S. Route 219, .25 miles  
southeast of Parsons  
Parsons Vicinity  
Tucker County  
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-237-M

HABS  
WVA  
47-PAR.V,  
1M-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY  
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HABS  
WVA  
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1M-

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

HABS No. WV-237-M

## PARSONS NURSERY, Fernow Experimental Forest Residence

Location: South side of U. S. Route 219, .25 miles southeast of Parsons, Tucker County, West Virginia

USGS Parsons Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 17.614338.4327437

Present Owner: Monongahela National Forest  
Department of Agriculture  
Sycamore Street, Box 1548  
Elkins, WV 26241

Last Occupant: Parsons Timber and Watershed Laboratory  
Forest Service  
Department of Agriculture

Last Use: Office/storage

Significance: The Fernow Experimental Forest residence, built in 1934 by members of Camp Parsons Civilian Conservation Corps, was one of the original administrative buildings for the Fernow Experimental Forest Branch Station, a part of the Appalachian Forest Experimental Station, headquartered in Ashville, NC. The staff of the Experimental Forest studied watershed and timber management on the nearby Elk Lick Run watershed. Closed from 1941 until 1948, this building was reoccupied by the head of the local staff of the reorganized Northeastern Forest Experimental Station. In 1964, the name was again changed to the Parsons Timber and Watershed Laboratory. The Fernow Experimental Forest is the only experimental forest in Monongahela National Forest. For overview of Parsons Nursery, see HABS No. WV-237.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1934, is derived from Mary Gaudineer's photograph showing the garage under construction in summer, 1934 (see historic photograph WV-237-M-6).
2. Architect: Neither architect nor landscape architect are known.
3. Original and present owner: Monongahela National Forest.
4. Builder: The Fernow Experimental Forest residence was constructed by members of Civilian Conservation Corps Camp Parsons for the Fernow Experimental Station Branch of the Appalachian Forest Experimental Station.
5. Original Plans: None.
6. Alterations and additions: A west, breakfast room addition was added to the kitchen and the north bedroom was added in the 1950s. The basement was added in the early 1960s. Pine crown molding has replaced the original chestnut in the master bedroom, hall, and west bedroom. The bathroom walls and ceiling have been replaced, bathroom and kitchen fixtures and plumbing has been updated. Dates are tentative, derived from conversation with Forest Service maintenance staff members.

B. Historical Context:

The Fernow Experimental Forest Branch Station was founded as an outdoor laboratory in 1934. To administer and house on-site researchers, members of Civilian Conservation Corps Camp Parsons constructed four buildings along the bank of the Black Fork River on the west side of the Parsons Nursery Bottom, on Forest Service land. The site is on the southern part of the Long Tract, purchased in 1933, and is across the road from the Cheat District Ranger residence. The Fernow Experimental Forest residence housed the local administrative head of the Station. In 1936, this was C. A. Abell, silviculturist-in-charge. The occupant of the residence was usually a junior forester or assistant forester. He had a local support staff. He was responsible for administering the development and maintenance of the Elk Lick watershed, the site of the experimental forest. Most of the actual research planning and analysis of results took place in Asheville, NC, at the Appalachian Forest Experimental Station.

In 1941, the building was boarded up as research programming was suspended because of World War II. The residence was again occupied when research was reactivated in 1948 as a research center with the project leader living at the Fernow Experimental Forest residence. Both while research headquarters were housed in Elkins, WV, from 1948 until 1964, and when headquarter were moved to Parsons. After 1964, the residence was continuously occupied by a member of the administrative staff until the flood of November, 1985. Since then, the building has been used for storage and offices.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The Fernow Experimental Forest residence is one of a complex of Forest Service buildings constructed in a simple, rustic, gable-roofed style. Unlike its neighboring Parsons Nursery buildings, it originally had horizontal, painted, lap siding on the first floor and vertical, painted siding on the gables. This building uses native materials available in Monongahela National Forest, such as chestnut panelling and it follows the local convention of exterior diagonal wind-brace sheathing with herringbone, centered joints under the siding.
2. Condition of fabric: Structurally sound and in use.

### B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: A one-story, rectangular plan, this building is 46'-4" x 22'-8", with a small kitchen addition 8'-1" x 12'-2". The front has four bays, the north side two bays, the west side three bays. It has no attic.
2. Foundation: 8" concrete block foundation wall. Originally the building had an unexcavated basement. In the early 1960s a basement was excavated under the center of the house, to reduce dampness.
3. Walls: Exterior walls have vinyl horizontal siding, 5" exposure, which replaced the original, painted, horizontal, wood siding in 1986. There are 3-1/2" vinyl corner boards. The foundation-roof height at the corner is 9'-10". The foundation-roof height at the peak of the main roof is 9'-10".
4. Structural system: The wood frame is not exposed except

PARSONS NURSERY, Fernow Experimental Forest Residence  
HABS No. WV-237-M (page 4)

at the eave overhangs. The roof has "2x6" rafters on 20" with "1x6" tongue-and-groove roof sheathing.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: Front south corner porch framed with "7x7" untrimmed posts and "2x6" rafters at 20" centers. The porch ceiling is "1x6" sheathing. The on-grade porch floor is random flagstone with grey mortar joints.
6. Chimneys: There are two chimneys, one for the fireplace, 3'x 1'-4", the second for the furnace flue, 1'-4" x 1'-8". Each has red wire-cut brick with a cap of soldier-laid brick with stacked half brick corners. Each chimney has galvanized, step flashing.
7. Openings
  - a. Doorways and doors: Front center doorway has new trim. There is a south side light, 1'-6" x 1'-11" of diamond-shaped glazing with a raised, molded panel below. The front door is pine, six-panel.
  - b. Windows and shutters: There is one size of window, 2' x 5'-3", with eight lights. They are used alone, in pairs and in threes. All are casement windows. Each window has new, vinyl trim with a 2" flat molded, mitered architrave and a raised, 2" sill stop. The bathroom window and the south kitchen window are recent replacements and differ in size from the original windows. There are double hung aluminum screens/storm sash on all windows. The original, green-painted, board-and-batten shutters with cut-out pine trees have been removed.
8. Roof: The gable roof has asbestos shingles that has replaced the original sawn cedar shingles. It has "2x6" exposed rafter ends clipped to meet a plain, new, "2x8" fascia. On each gable end the "2x8" rake board is notched so that the three trim elements could extend. The "4x4" wall plate, the "4x4" ridge piece, and a "4x4" extension mid-way between wall plate and ridge piece have been removed. The south gable end has vinyl soffits covering the rafter ends. Eave corners have unpainted and unfinished plywood boxed corners. The gable end overhang is 17", including the rake board; the eave overhang is 18", including the fascia. There is a triangular, pressed galvanized louver roof vent at each gable end, approximately 20" tall.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The rectangular building originally was "L" shaped. The north bedroom and the kitchen breakfast area were added in the 1950s. A door to the bathroom was closed when the bath tub was added.
2. Stairways: There are exterior stairs to the basement.
3. Flooring: All rooms have 2-1/4" oak flooring, except the kitchen and bath, which have modern vinyl flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: As a part of the conscious rustic design, interiors are unstained, unvarnished, native chestnut. Walls in the living room, kitchen, bedrooms, and east side of hall are random width vertical chestnut beveled boards with 1/2" bead. West side of hall has plain, "1x6" chestnut tongue-and-groove boards. All paneled rooms originally had a 2", beveled, chestnut crown molding and no baseboards. The crown mold is now dark stained pine in the master bedroom, hall and west bedroom. The ceilings are 4' x 8' sheets of drywall with a swirl pattern. The bathroom has plastic sheet covering walls and ceiling.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doors: All door jambs are 3/4" beaded chestnut trim. Doors are brown stained, pine, two-panel doors.
  - b. Windows: All windows have no jamb but a 3/4" molding. The sill is a 1" ogee bed molding. Sash is unvarnished pine.
6. Decorative features and trim: The fireplace in the living room has a 4'-5" mantle with side pilasters. The kitchen has original chestnut board-and-batten cabinets doors made of vertical, unbeaded boards. There is mitered, surface mounted trim, 1-1/2" wide on each door, to make a "panel." The cabinets are the same as those in the Fernow Experimental Forest bunkhouse.
7. Hardware: The door hardware is plain brass-plated iron with three ball-pinned hinges and a plain, brass-plated iron knob plate with bevelled edge and round, hollow knob. Windows have two brass-plated hinges with ball pins. Window latches are a turn latch on a plain plate and a stamped, hook plate closure.
8. Mechanical equipment: There is a new forced-air furnace. The fireplace has a heatilator with decorative cast iron

PARSONS NURSERY, Fernow Experimental Forest Residence  
HABS No. WV-237-M (page 6)

grilles, the same as those in the bunkhouse. All plumbing is new. All light fixtures are modern, florescent except the exterior, iron, hanging light with hexagonal slag glass panels on the front porch ceiling.

9. Original furnishings: None.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces northeast,  $57^{\circ}30'$ . It survives on its original site, together with most of the original nursery structures and all the original Fernow Experimental Forest structures (see WV-237-7). A 2'-6" field stone retaining wall extends 35 yards from the foundation west toward the Black Fork River. A 4'-2" concrete walk extends 14' from the front door to a gravel parking area. At the back door is 5' x 3' 6" concrete stoop. At the corner of the nursery lane and the gravel parking area, 14' from the residence, is a 2-1/2' diameter blue spruce (*Picea pungens*).
2. Historic landscape design: None.
3. Outbuildings: The Fernow Experimental Forest garage, built in 1934, is south of the residence. It has a gable roof and rectangular plan, 31'-8" x 21'-2". Its design, construction, and detailing mirrors that of the Fernow Experimental Forest residence, bunkhouse and well house. The original lap siding and gable vertical siding has been replaced with vinyl siding, corner boards, door and window trim. It has overhead garage doors and windows of the same design as those of the residence, 4'-7" x 2'. On the interior, the "2x4" framing is exposed. On the north is a two-bay garage; on the south is a shop, 11'-2" x 20'-6" now used for poison storage for use in the Experimental Forest. A wire fenced, locked room on the south and west houses the poison containers. There is a 1'-4" square, wire-cut brick chimney on the north wall of the shop and a 22" x 23" louver and fan on the east wall, showing that the shop always has had heat and always had housed volatile or toxic materials needing ventilation.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings: None.
- B. Historic views: Forest Service photographs, Monongahela National Forest Office, Elkins, WV.
- C. Interviews: John King, 9-5-1989, Wanakena, NY, silviculture

PARSONS NURSERY, Fernow Experimental Forest Residence  
HABS No. WV-237-M (page 7)

supervisor, CCC Camp Parsons, 1933-42; Dorsey Knight, 10-24-1989, Parsons, WV, Parsons Nursery employee, 1932-1951.

- D. McKim, C. R., Monongahela National Forest History, unpublished manuscript, November, 1970.

Trimble, George R., Jr., A History of the Fernow Experimental Forest and the Parsons Timber and Watershed Laboratory, Upper Darby, Pa.: Northeastern Forest Experimental Station, 1977.

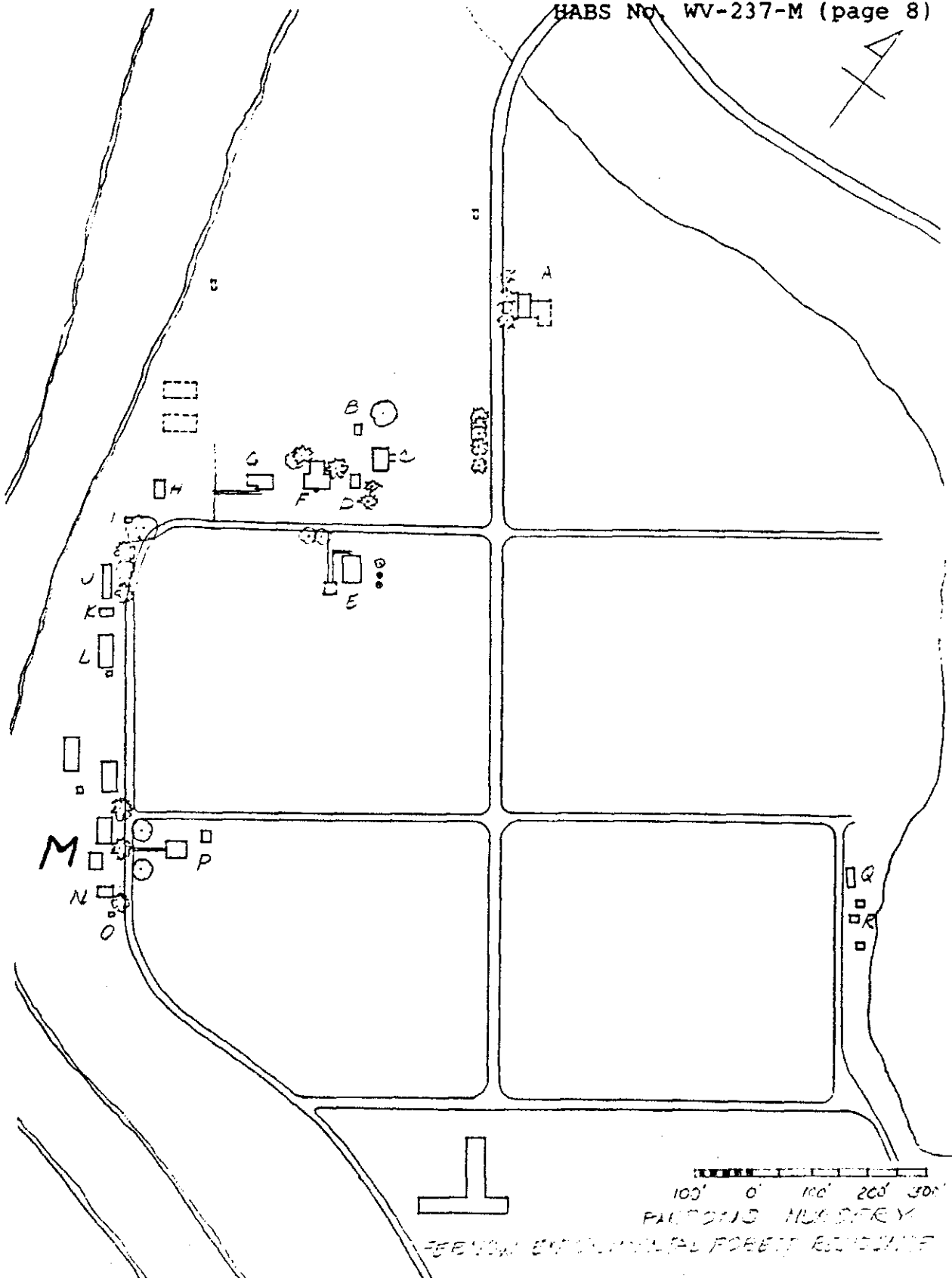
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The architectural and historical documentation of the Parsons Nursery site has been undertaken to fulfill a memorandum of agreement signed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the West Virginia SHPO and the USDA Forest Service as part of requirements under regulation 36 CFR 800 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Recording has taken place prior to substantial modification and/or removal of structures damaged by a flood in November, 1985.

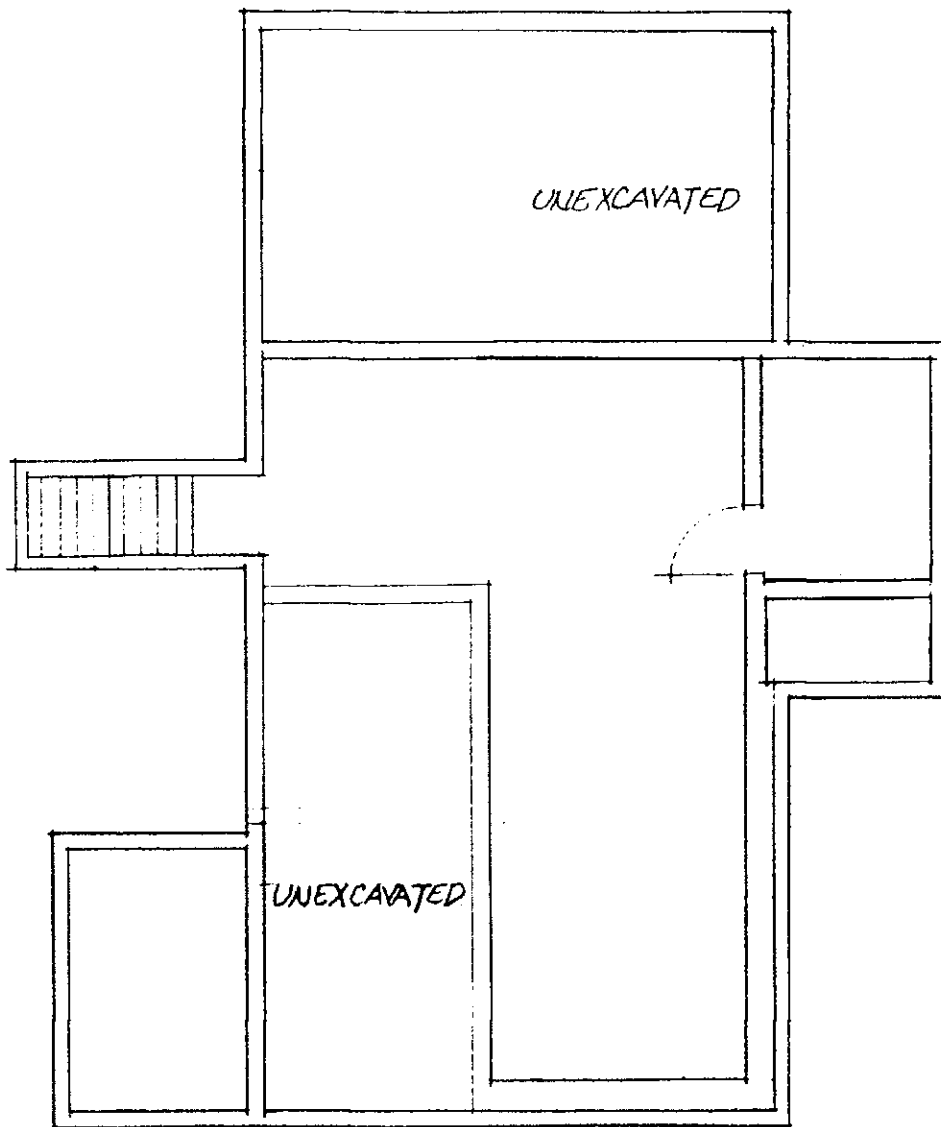
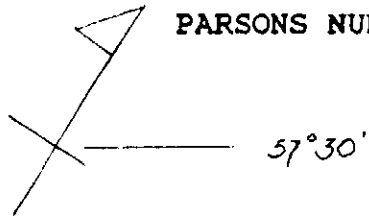
This documentation has been prepared by: Rebecca M. Rogers, Preservation Consultant, 44 Audubon Road, Youngstown, Ohio, under contract to Monongahela National Forest, April-November, 1989.



PARSONS NURSERY, Fernow Experimental Forest Residence  
HABS No. WV-237-M (page 8)



PARSONS NURSERY, Fernow Experimental Forest Residence  
HABS No. WV-237-M (page 9)

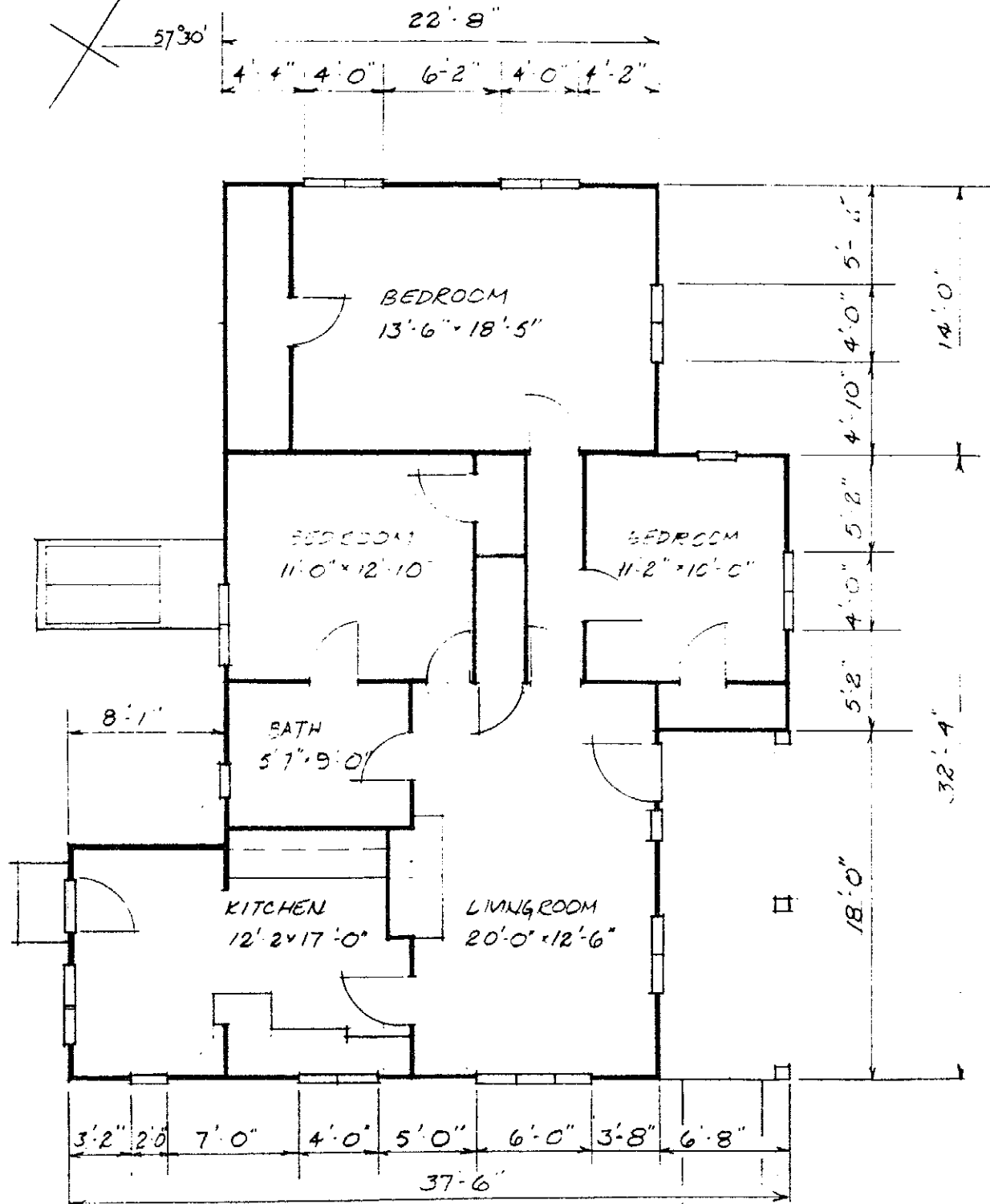


FERNOW RESIDENCE - BASEMENT

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PARSONS NURSERY, Fernow Experimental Forest Residence  
HABS No. WV-237-M (page 10)



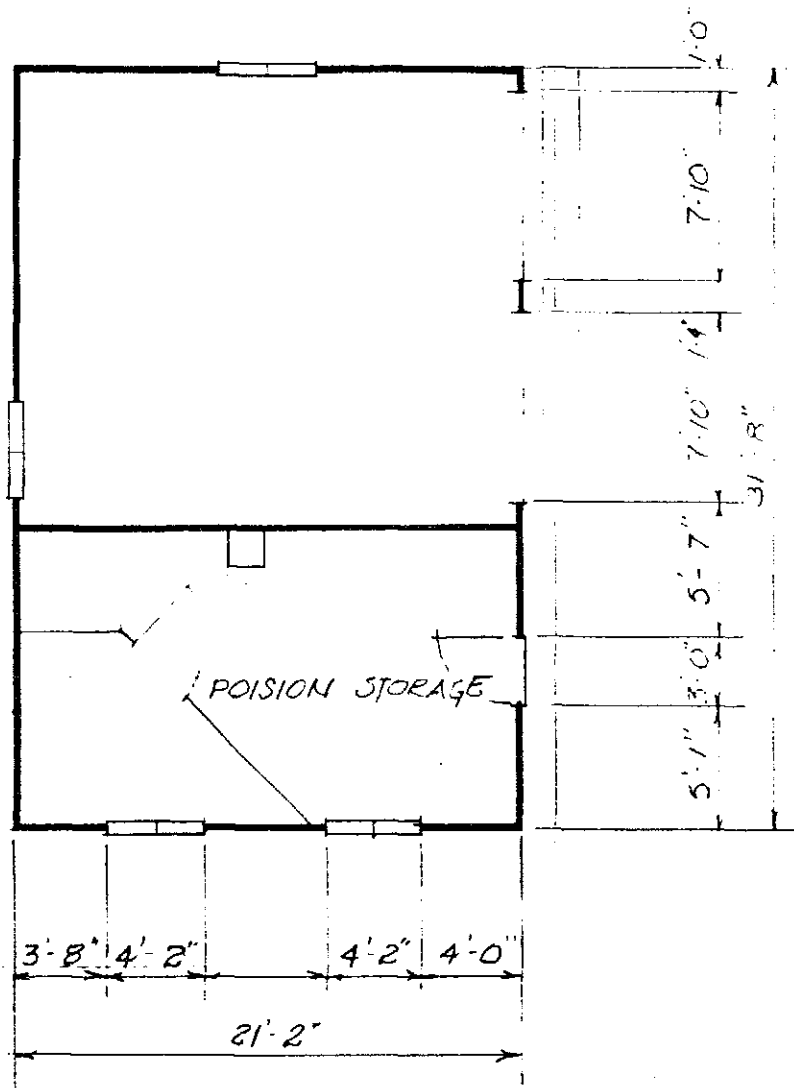
FERNOW RESIDENCE

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PARSONS NURSERY, Fernow Experimental Forest Residence  
HABS No. WV-237-M (page 11)

57°30'



FERNOW RESIDENCE GARAGE

4 2 0 2 4 6 8 10

10-9-83